

Message Text

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PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

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EB-07 /084 W

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R 141631Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: "DIE ZEIT" ARTICLE ON ASSESSMENT OF DOMESTIC
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: 1. IN A THOUGHTFUL ARTICLE FOR
"DIE ZEIT" JAN 10 "FEAR BEFORE THE HURRICANE: A
HARD YEAR FOR THE COALITION," ROLF ZUNDEL DESCRIBED
THE PROBLEMS OF THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION
AND DISMISSES SOME OF THE SPECULATION ABOUT
POSSIBLE CHANGES (E.G., A SPECIAL ELECTION, GRAND
COALITION, FDP-CDU COALITION).

2. ZUNDEL BEGINS THE ARTICLE BY CITING THE TWO MAJOR
TESTS THE COALITION WILL FACE IN L975: THE STATE OF
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THE ECONOMY AND THE FIVE LAENDER ELECTIONS, ESPECIALLY

NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA (NRW). THE PROBLEM, HE WRITES, IS COMPLICATED BY TIMING, THAT IS, ANY IMPROVEMENT OF THE ECONOMY IS NOT LIKELY TO BE CLEARLY DISCERNIBLE BY THE MAY 4 NRW ELECTION. IT IS POSSIBLE, HE WRITES, THAT THE CDU WILL BE VICTORIOUS AND REPLACE THE SPD/FDP COALITION GOVERNMENT IN NRW. IF THIS IS THE CASE, ZUNDEL WRITES, WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES?

3. A CDU VICTORY IN NRW WOULD CHANGE THE MAJORITY IN FAVOR OF THE CDU IN THE BUNDESTAG-BUNDESRAT CONFERENCE COMMITTEE BUT WOULD NOT FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE THE POWER RELATIONSHIP (I.E., THE CDU/CSU ALREADY HAS A SLIGHT MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT WHICH IS SUFFICIENT TO BLOCK BUNDESTAG LEGISLATION THAT REQUIRES BUNDESRAT APPROVAL BUT NOT THE BULK OF LEGISLATION THAT REQUIRES ONLY THAT THE BUNDESRAT BE CONSULTED).

4. TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW NATIONAL ELECTION SHOULD THE SPD SUFFER A SEVERE DEFEAT IN NRW, ZUNDEL WRITES THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO BASE SUCH A PRESUMPTION ON THE EXPERIENCE IN 1966 WHEN THE CDU LOSSES IN THE NRW ELECTION CONTRIBUTED TO THE FALL OF THE ERHARD GOVERNMENT. AT THAT TIME, ZUNDEL WRITES, ERHARD HAD LOST THE CONFIDENCE OF THE GERMAN VOTING PUBLIC AND HIS OWN PARTY. SCHMIDT, ON THE OTHER HAND, REMAINS POPULAR IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE, AND ALTHOUGH MANY SPD LEADERS HAVE NO AFFECTION FOR THE CHANCELLOR, HE IS RESPECTED.

5. ZUNDEL ALSO RULES OUT AN FDP/CDU COALITION GIVEN STATEMENTS BY PARTY LEADER GENSCHER AND FINANCE MINISTER FRIDERICHs THAT THE COALITION WITH THE SPD WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE 1976 ELECTIONS. AN ABRUPT CHANGE, THE JOURNALIST WRITES, AS A RESULT OF PANIC SHOULD THE FDP FAIL TO OBTAIN FIVE PERCENT IN NRW WOULD BE A CERTAIN ROAD TO POLITICAL SUICIDE FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY. ONLY IN THE BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS WILL THE COALITION PARTNERS BE IN A POSITION TO CAMPAIGN

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ON THEIR NATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

6. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ARTICLE ZUNDEL DOES ADMIT THAT CERTAIN DEVELOPMENTS COULD ALTER THE SITUATION. (1) A WORLD-WIDE DEPRESSION COULD HINDER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM, (2) SETBACKS IN THE LAENDER ELECTIONS COULD MAKE LIBERAL PARTY REACTIONS UNPREDICTABLE, AND (3) SEVERE DEFEATS FOR THE SPD IN THE LAENDER ELECTIONS COULD CREATE OPPOSITION TO SCHMIDT WITHIN THE SPD. A COMBINATION OF THESE THREE FACTORS, HE ADMITS, WOULD BE FATAL FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. WHAT WILL BE DECISIVE FOR THE COALITION, HE CONCLUDES, WILL BE IF IT HAS THE POWER AND THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISCIPLINE TO CARRY THROUGH THE DIFFICULT PERIOD AHEAD.

"THE TEAM IN THE GOVERNMENT BOAT," HE WRITES, "NEED NOT BE AFRAID OF THE HURRICANE SO LONG AS THEY..

.BAIL OUT THE BOAT AND HOLD TO THEIR COURSE." END

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7. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. COMMENT: ZUNDEL'S ARTICLE SEEMS TO THE EMBASSY TO BE A REALISTIC AND BALANCED ASSESSMENT. MUCH OF THE TALK LATELY ABOUT DRASTIC POLITICAL CHANGES IS, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME

BEING, PURE SPECULATION AND SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TOO
SERIOUSLY. HOWEVER, RATIONALITY IN POLITICS IS NOT
ALWAYS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE AND PANIC, ESPECIALLY ON THE
PART OF THE FDP IF IT FALLS BELOW FIVE PERCENT IN NRW,
COULD CREATE AN "EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF" MENTALITY THAT
COULD PRODUCE SUDDEN, UNPREDICTABLE POLITICAL MOVES.
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